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TAGS: [EAIR](#) [ETRD](#) [KTIA](#) [PIRN](#) [EINV](#) [GA](#) [GH](#)
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: U.S. FIRM'S INTEREST IN LEASING
AIRCRAFT, ASSESSMENT OF CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY

REF: BANJUL 10 ET AL (NOTAL)

Classified By: Amb Joseph D. Stafford for reason 1.4 (B and D)

1.(U) This message contains proprietary information. Please
protect accordingly.

U.S. FIRM'S INTEREST IN AIRCRAFT LEASING DEAL

12. (SBU) Ambassador met recently with the visiting President
and Vice President of an American firm, Jetstream; the latter
indicated interest in a deal to lease two passenger aircraft
to the Gambian International Airlines (GIA) under a wet-lease
arrangement. The Jetstream reps, noting that GIA currently
has no aircraft at its disposal, said GIA wished to establish
itself as a carrier on routes in West Africa and perhaps
elsewhere in Africa. The visitors were cautious about
prospects of closing a deal with GIA, saying it was now up
the latter to come up with required funds for leasing; they
expressed interest in staying in touch with the Embassy as
discussions with GIA continued.

UPBEAT ASSESSMENT OF THE GAMBIAN CIVIL AVIATION SECTOR

13. (SBU) Noteworthy was the visitors' upbeat assessment of
the staffs at the Gambia Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) as
well as GIA. The Jetstream reps said they had come away from
their meetings at GCAA and GIA impressed by their
interlocutors' expertise and professionalism, describing them
as a "cut above" officials in similar positions they had
encountered elsewhere in West Africa (they cited Ghana, in
particular). The visitors paid special tribute to the
U.S.-trained acting GCAA Director, Paul Bass, saying he
displayed not only strong technical expertise in the civil
aviation field but also a good sense of the commercial aspect
of airline operations.

14. (SBU) The Jetstream reps asserted that the GCAA and GIA
officials they encountered also compared favorably with their
counterparts elsewhere in the region (they again cited Ghana)
in not making even veiled requests for kickbacks or other
blandishments in order to facilitate a deal.

COMMENT

15. (C) It remains to be seen whether the GIA, a public enterprise, will manage to come up with the funds -- whether from government coffers or elsewhere -- to close a deal with Jetstream. Meanwhile, given the mixed reviews we have previously received about the performance of acting GCAA head Bass (reftel), we were struck by the visitors' enthusiastically positive assessment -- which gives grounds for optimism about the GCAA's prospects for continued cooperation with FAA and achievement of Category One status. While we defer to Embassy Accra, we must confess to skepticism about the visitors' unfavorable comparison of Ghana's civil aviation sector with The Gambia's, given what we assume is the former's considerably higher level of development in this sector as well as its much higher anti-corruption marks generally from Transparency International, for example, as compared to The Gambia. END COMMENT.
STAFFORD